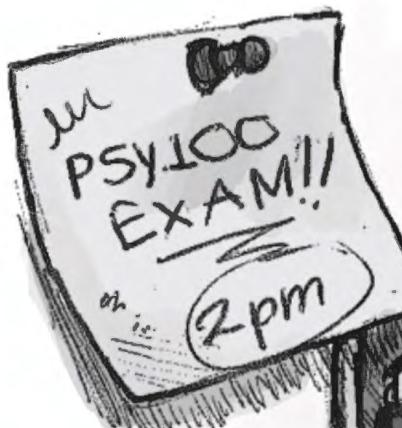


THE INNIS HERALD

Volume 60! Issue 2



Innis Bathroom Named Eighth Man Made Wonder of the World

Clare Mooney
SATIRE

The “Seven Wonders of The World” are known as some of the most beautiful and sought after destinations on the planet, drawing crowds of millions every year. From the Colosseum to the Great Wall of China, these man-made works are impressive to anyone who seeks them out.

This week, however, the Official Wonders Committee (OWC) has named an eighth man-made wonder: The Innis Bathrooms. Complete with stunning views of the basement and urinals that are formed into a six sided cube, the ancient minds behind the building of this monument are yet to be understood. Experts have lovingly named the artifact, “The Glory Hole.” Rumors have formed that ancient spirits may lie in the depths of the far-reaching hallway.

“There’s a certain mystique to it,” stated one Daniels student, “I find myself drawn to its beauty and grace each time that I am allowed to leave Spadina Circle.”

Experts have warned that gaining this type of recognition could impact the state of affairs at Innis and the university as a whole. We are likely to see increased crowds, and potentially attacks on the location.

One Writing and Rhetoric student noted, “It’s like people are realizing that this place exists. We W&R students have been pissing in the Glory Hole for years, and now there’s constantly a run on the place. People are even stealing parts of the wall.”

Some Innis students, mostly Cinema Studies, are fans of the attention, noting that, “It could be good for industry connections.”

Several other Toronto locations were also considered for the list of man made wonders, including Sankofa Square, The Path, and the Queen Street Brandy Melville.



THE
BOUNDARY

bianca eats... as usual

best creamy artichoke dip ever my new favourite food group

Bianca Mehrotra
RECIPE



welcome to my new column, *bianca eats... as usual* (if you don't get it, figure it out, i am not explaining). here's where i try to cook like gordon ramsay, but with less words that will not be named (my mom told me not to swear online) and no michelin stars (not yet...). as a current academic victim, who *definitely* should not be cooking or writing this right now (but i do it anyways, for you, my loyal fans — don't act like you're not ignoring your responsibilities too), i'll share all the recipes, kitchen disasters (trust me they happen more than you know), and my delicious moments of triumph (hehe). who needs sleep or sanity when you can have a tasty (hopefully?) treat, right? trust me, just try it — i promise it'll taste better than it looks (and i am saying that with confidence).

ingredients

- 1 jar of artichoke hearts (chopped)
- 1/2 onion or 1 small onion (i like white or yellow onion)
- 1/2 cup of mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup of parmesan cheese (use the pantry shit here, who cares)
- couple cloves of garlic (depends on what and who you're into if you know what i mean)
- black pepper to taste (go crazy, i do it until i can clearly acknowledge that there is pepper in the dip)

you can pretty much add any of your favourite spices or mix-ins here — let this be your blank canvas!

cooking instructions

- 1 preheat oven to 350 degrees (fahrenheit)
- 2 bake for 30 mins covered (aluminum foil NOT plastic wrap)
- 3 broil on high for 5 uncovered (or until top is brown)

and voila the most rich, decadent, indulgent appetizer that will have everyone craving! serve it with bread, pita chips, or anything your heart truly desires! don't forget to tell everyone who u got this recipe from too...

see you next edition!



The Traumatic Coming-of-Age Narrative of *It Follows*

The meaning you may have missed

Burak Batu Tunçel

REVIEW

Content warning: Sexual assault

The concept of a sexually transmitted curse of a shapeshifting pursuer that can only be eluded by passing it onto another person has terrified, surprised, and haunted audiences ever since its 2014 premiere at the Cannes Film Festival. On its 10th anniversary, *It Follows* continues to be one of the most stylish and iconic horror outings of the century. It's also one of the most widely misinterpreted films of its kind. Since it came out, audiences and critics have tried to grasp it as a metaphor for STDs in relation to the slasher sub-genre's "sexual disgust."

However, the carefully placed thematic patterns in the narrative suggests that it is concerned about something else. Following its teenage characters as they try to make their way out of their cursed situation, the filmmakers make some conscious decisions about character psychology and the production design's nostalgic quality in order to convey that the shapeshifting demon might actually represent losing your innocence in a traumatic experience.

There is a striking deliberate choice in the narrative's focus. *It Follows* is foremost a film about young-adults, with emphasis on the "young." The actual adults themselves do not function as causal agents or central figures in the film. Even in that short moment where we hear the Height family's mother talking to a friend, the framing doesn't take her face in—rather the camera selectively focuses on somewhere else. Thus, the film makes its aim clear as it focuses on the teenagers' perspective by eliminating the adult factor—perhaps also to indicate this journey is experienced without their control.

Often, films tend to foreshadow their central themes in the opening sequence. Good films do this in less direct ways, feeding on imagery and associations. The story opens up in a suburb—far from the chaos of the city and a place of comfort. A young woman runs away from her house, which we learn is her family's house after her father yells after her in concern. She takes the car and runs off far away to a lake, where in her last moments, she calls her parents to apologize and say that she loves them. The sequence then ends with death. What we take away from these

first four minutes is that this is a narrative of separation from the world one knew from their childhood and how that separation can lead to deadly results.

The film expands on this theme through the protagonist Jay's involvement with the curse and harsh journey into adulthood. Before the introduction of "it," the film takes its time to set up the background for the character. The shot opens up with a camera pan on the sidewalks where children's hands once drew small illustrations and a hopscotch game. This is an environment filled with grass and trees, a place the city's pollution hasn't affected yet. And of course, it's in the suburbs. We see Jay in the pool, just swimming in the middle, in comfort as birds and squirrels are playing their small games. This is an innocent, almost childlike environment where nothing can go wrong. Even the pool, in its water-filled comfort, recalls through Freudian ideals the relaxed and safe environment of the mother's womb—that is until the film progresses and the water becomes a more dangerous place.

It is undeniable that there is a nostalgic quality to the production design. On the old CRT TV, black and white science fiction films play out, while on the streets, classic cars are parked in the alleys. We see a shell-reader in Yara's hands—a technology which never existed. There is also Disasterpiece's synth score, an homage to classic horror films like *Halloween*. In engaging with retro aesthetics and setting up a nostalgic tone, David Gordon Mitchell reminds the viewer of childhood, which is something that the characters will lose throughout the film.

On their first date, Jay and Hugh—who passes the curse to Jay—play a "trading places" game where Jay asks Hugh who he would trade places with. The answer is a small child whose "whole life is in front of him" and who doesn't need to worry about anything. Hugh has the curse by this point; in the film's code, he is an adult. As such, he always lives under the dread that he can die at any time by the hand of the "it," which may be death, in its inevitable self.

After they have sex in the car—which is Jay's first time—she hazily delivers a monologue, remembering a time when she could only dream of going on dates while childishly playing with a poppy. Then, of course, the horrors enter the story when she gets knocked out by Hugh. The scene plays out in a long take, with a violent tone,



Maika Monroe in *It Follows* (2014)

showing the act in its entirety. Hugh then ties Jay up as he explains the curse to her, taking away her control. Finally, he drops her off in the middle of the road in front of her house.

There is something very vulgar about how these scenes play out. The police officer asks Jay in the aftermath: "Was it consensual?" Jay nods yes. But there is obviously something wrong in the way the police are there and how the neighborhood is watching her. The sex in the scene was consensual, yes, but the violence obviously wasn't. There is no consent in the way the curse isn't known by Jay beforehand either. The associations created through the mistreatment of the character indicate that "it" represents sexual assault, without pinpointing what "it" is. That traumatic experience becomes embodied by "it." It is a harsh way to realize life's cruelty, and there is a sense of dread which follows like the "it" of the film. Nevertheless, the director behind the camera is sympathetic towards his character and allows her to grow up and fight the trauma.

"Something's wrong with me," says Jay. She is shown examining her body in front of the mirror in an effort to understand herself in the aftermath of the assault. Trauma obviously leads to a sense of psychological estrangement of the self, but the character will go on to live on despite the sense of dread that follows. Her sister and friends support her but can not see "it" or do not seem to fully understand what is going on. Those who do are people who have experienced the curse before, making them survivors of sexual assault in a way, too. Those who do not believe in these people's experiences with "it"—like Gregg who doesn't take Jay's warnings seriously after the curse is passed onto him—are the ones who get punished. In that way, the film can be also seen as an anti-victim-blaming narrative in its own slasher code.

The locations the characters travel to after this point are places they have been to in their childhood, but the comfort they seek is now subverted into potential places where "it" can pursue

them. For instance, the beach they go to is a body of water which, in contrast with the Freudian womb association of the pool from before, becomes a place where they can be attacked. This is as if to say that the baby has grown now, and if she stays in it any longer, the womb will suffocate her. As an adult, the solace found in comfort zones is significantly diminished, providing an imperative to find ways to overcome danger.

That is precisely why the characters go to the childhood pool to defeat "it." The pool is where Jay remembers first being kissed by Paul; it is a place which provided a small step towards adulthood, but nevertheless, it remains a place of childhood memories. Even the director agrees that the plan is "childish." Yet, given that they are still young, they can only deal with things in the ways that they know. It is a childish way to achieve adulthood. The pool is where Jay is most comfortable, so through her control in the environment, she has more chances of beating "it." However, there still are some obstacles in Jay's path. That is why "it" takes the form of her father, but the comfort of the figure is deceptive. As in the metaphor for the mother's womb, the child needs to break away from the parents to have her own autonomy.

After beating "it," Jay and Paul have sex for the first time. Paul asks if she feels any different, and she says she doesn't. In the end, we see them walking together, holding hands. Jay obviously faced—and in some ways, overcame—the trauma, but there still is an uncertainty towards the rest of life. She has learned that she is not invincible and can get hurt, that there is always danger and death waiting around the corner. That's why Yara reads an excerpt from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*: "But the most terrible agony may not be in the wounds themselves but in knowing for certain that within an hour, then within ten minutes, then within half a minute, now at this very instant—your soul will leave your body and you will no longer be a person, and that is certain; the worst thing is that it is certain."

Megafopolis

Zoe Johnston

REVIEW

2024 has been a spectacular year for box-office flops. *The Marvels*, Disney's long-awaited follow-up to 2019's smash hit *Captain Marvel*, failed to earn back its whopping \$275 million budget; *Joker: Folie à Deux*, the jukebox musical sequel to a *Taxi Driver* rip-off made by the guy who directed the *Hangover* movies, failed to land with critics and audiences alike, leading to losses in the hundreds of millions; and *Megalopolis*, the long-stagnating passion project of Francis Ford Coppola, made just \$13 million at the box office despite carrying a \$136 million price tag. At least *The Marvels* was good.

Maybe there were signs. Maybe Coppola starting production on the film a full forty-five years after he conceived of it because he had to fork over all the money himself was a sign. Maybe nearly every actor in Hollywood passing on the project before it was finally cast was a sign. Maybe choosing to cast actors who were "cancelled at one point or another," including Shia LaBeouf (currently being sued for sexual battery, assault, and infliction of emotional distress by ex-girlfriend FKA twigs), Jon Voight (noted Republican and Trump supporter), and Dustin Hoffman (accused by seven women of sexual misconduct) was a sign. Maybe Coppola firing almost all of the visual effects team due to supposed creative differences was a sign. Maybe Coppola kissing top-

less female extras during filming two months before his wife died was a sign. Maybe Lionsgate only being willing to distribute the film if Coppola would pay \$17 million of the marketing costs was a sign. Maybe the first trailer having to be pulled for using generative AI to fabricate negative reviews of Coppola's previous films was a sign. Or maybe not. What do I know? Surely Coppola, the guy who made *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*, couldn't let us down!

For a movie that has been in development since the seventies and rewritten a reported three times, the narrative is so bizarre and awkwardly structured that it reads more like the first effort from an eighteen-year-old fresh off his very first film class or the cocaine-fuelled rant of a supposed genius long past his prime. The film follows brilliant architect Cesar Catalina (Adam Driver) as he attempts to build a city of the future, Megalopolis, with an amorphous shimmery blob he calls Megalon. Previously, his wife killed herself and he was prosecuted for her murder by now-mayor Franklyn Cicero (Giancarlo Esposito). Now, he's falling in love with Cicero's ambiguously bisexual and useless daughter, Julia (Nathalie Emmanuel). Earlier, he just dumped his fiendish mistress, TV presenter Wow Platinum (Aubrey Plaza), who has now set her sights on Cesar's wealthy and senile uncle, Hamilton Crassus (Jon Voight). Also, he's feuding with his rat-tailed cousin, Cladio (Shia LaBeouf), who's a fascist now. Before, he won a

Nobel Prize. Currently, he's an alcoholic. In unrelated news, he can stop time. All of this information is delivered in a steady stream of dialogue that believes itself deep and meaningful. *I am saying something*, Coppola seems to be screaming at his audience, *I still have things to say!* Unfortunately, his metaphors and allegories are so bogged down by his complete creative control that the only thing *Megalopolis* seems to be saying is that maybe there's a reason Coppola peaked in 1979. Characters and plotlines are dropped at random, never to return (farewell, Grace Vanderwaal as a teen pop sensation who swears to remain a virgin, only to be deep-faked into a sex tape with Driver and subsequently rebranded as a Bad Girl pop star who is more akin to Jojo Siwa than any actual Bad Girl pop star, we hardly knew ye). Driver recites the entirety of Hamlet's most notable soliloquy for no reason at all, Julia and Cicero exchange two lines in fluent Latin that do not reappear for the entire film, and often it feels as though there is a longer movie of dubious quality hidden within a shorter (though, with a runtime of 138 minutes, I am loath to call *Megalopolis* short), worse one.

Clunky scripts can often be dragged along by good acting, and bad acting can occasionally be saved by the quality of a script. The same cannot be said for *Megalopolis*, whose performers range from the uninspired (Emmanuel, who has more chemistry with the idea of Driver than the man himself) to the baffling (Driver plays every scene straight, including ones in which he is combing the hair of the hallucinated corpse of his aforementioned dead wife or tripping

on vaguely futuristic drugs for what feels like ten uninterrupted minutes) to the bombastic (Plaza, vamping her ass off even as the script demands she kiss Driver's feet and mount LaBeouf's face to snip his rat tail off while he calls her "Auntie Wow"). No one is acting like they're in the same movie, which isn't helped by the visually flat, often washed-out, and frankly ugly quality of the CGI and visual effects that regularly make the audience feel as if actors were all filming in separate rooms so that their scenes could be spliced together in post-production. It lends the film a strangely disjointed quality not helped by the fact that the timeline lurches forward in unwieldy bursts that leave Julia realizing her pregnancy in one scene and holding the fakiest-looking baby doll since *American Sniper* in the next.

I have not even begun to delve into the most insane parts of this movie. Cladio is in an incestuous relationship with all three of his sisters (named Clodia, Claudine, and Claudette.) A Soviet satellite crashes into Earth and destroys most of the city. Cesar is shot in the face and has his skull rebuilt with Megalon. Crassus, dressed in a Robin Hood costume, murders Wow by shooting her with a bow and arrow he had been disguising as his penis. There is an extended dead wife montage torn directly from many better movies made by worse directors. Everything is a metaphor and nothing is a metaphor, and in case you were wondering who the brilliant visionary here to save the future was truly meant to represent, Julia and Cesar's eventual child, should it be a boy, will be named Francis.



Happy Herald! A Christmas Conundrum

The five (5) hottest members of the Innis Herald—Kiran, Julian, Bianca, Simba, and Ryan—are preparing holiday gift baskets for the rest of the team. Each of them purchases some materials; the details are organized in the table below.

Item	Cost (\$)	Purchaser
movie tickets	90	Kiran
chocolate	30	Julian
tea and instant coffee	10	Bianca
various fruits	55	Simba
baskets and ribbons	15	Ryan

Thus far, some members have spent more money than others—not ideal. The total cost of gift basket supplies is \$200, so, to keep things fair, each person needs to have a net expenditure of \$40 ($= \$200 / 5$).

Describe a sequence of transactions between members, after which everyone will have the same net expenditure of \$40. Consider using a spreadsheet or table to organize your work.

by Ryan Nguyen

Figured it out? Try the following extensions:

- Is there a sequence of four (4) transactions that accomplishes the same goal? How about three (3) transactions?
- What if Kiran is only able to pay Julian, Julian only Bianca, Bianca only Simba, Simba only Ryan, and Ryan only Kiran? Phrased differently, Kiran is unable to pay Bianca, Simba, or Ryan; Julian is unable to pay Simba, Ryan, or Kiran; and so on. (Perhaps there is some technical bug in the masthead's favourite cash transfer app.) Under this restriction, can you still find a sequence of transactions that does the job?
- Do the answers to these questions change if we change the costs in the table? What if we change the number of members?

Here's a well-known contest math problem that is, surprisingly, tightly linked to the second extension:

There are n gas stations along a circular road. The total amount of fuel at these stations is exactly the amount needed for a car to complete one loop. Show that there is a point on the road from where the car with an initially empty fuel tank can complete a loop.



A Vindication of *Wonka* (2023)

Charles H. Nichols

REVIEW

You're scrolling on your phone. It's early 2021, a very dark period for film and its fans. Somehow or other, you happen across a piece of information, perhaps through a meme, or an incredulous tweet (they were still called tweets then). In any case, it said: "they're making a Willy Wonka movie with Timothée Chalamet." You don't believe it, so you google it. Lo and behold, a card pops up, a purple background with "WONKA" in the iconic golden script. And below that, another card for the cast: Timothée Chalamet. You're flabbergasted. This is a time before we had reached absolute remake apocalypse, but still, you think, "I should've known." For most, this announcement was enough to write off the movie as a ridiculous concept. A soulless, cynical cash-grab capitalizing on Chalamet's popularity and putting no consideration into actually creating a worthwhile story. I, too, fell into this camp.

I had no intention of seeing *Wonka*. By the time December 2023 rolled around, I had all but forgotten about it. But while home for the holidays, my mom was taking her boyfriend's daughter to go see it and invited me and my brother to come along. We said sure, why not? And as I walked out of the theater, I turned to my brother and said, "Is it just me, or was that a pretty fun movie?" and he furrowed his brow and replied, "Yeah, I think that was actually just, like, good." And thus have I felt for the past year, unable to reconcile this experience with the public attitude, which seemed to remain indifferent, if not dismissive, of *Wonka* after it came out. For too long have I stood by in silence, afraid of being exposed for having a "wrong" opinion about this movie. But no more. I am going to state loud and proud: I liked *Wonka*! And I think you would too. Minor spoilers ahead.

Let's start with the elephant in the room. Easily the most vocally criticized aspect of this movie is the casting of Timothée Chalamet as the iconic Willy Wonka, and I don't think it's completely unwarranted. He's obviously no Gene Wilder (but then, who is?), and if you're a fan of Depp's performance, he's not that either. Some argue that Chalamet is too squeaky-clean and white-bread to portray Wonka, that he woefully lacks the glint of madness that should be lurking behind the eyes of the chocolatier. But remember, this Wonka is younger than the depictions we're used to. He hasn't spent decades running a global chocolate business, dealing with sabotage from



Paterson Joseph, Matt Lucas, Gianni Calchetti, Hayden Ellingworth, Malcolm J K Baker, Edward Terry, Mathew Baynton, Timothée Chalamet, Richard Price, and Nick Owenford in *Wonka* (2023)

his competitors. Chalamet's *Wonka* has got the eccentricity, but it manifests in an innocent and naïve optimism, which I think perfectly suits the story this movie is telling while leaving room for him to lose that innocence down the road. Yes, the weird, sort-of-accent thing he does with his voice sounds pretty goofy, but in a kid's movie that's no crime. And I get it. I, too, am wont to glance sideways at another skinny white guy seemingly getting a free ride through Hollywood. But honestly, I couldn't dislike the guy if I tried. I've never seen him give a poor performance, and the man has range. But more than that, he looks like he's having fun the whole time, and never acts like he's above a role. *Wonka* is no exception: Chalamet absolutely full-sends the absent-minded whimsy and juvenile unseriousness of the film. He doesn't try to look cool or sexy and isn't afraid to play the fool a bit. I have to respect that.

But then there's the other glaring issue for many skeptics: why are we making a Willy Wonka origin story in the first place? And you'd be right to criticize this. I've been pulling my hair out since *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), watching Hollywood collapse into an IP black hole where every new piece of media has to be somehow related to an existing property. It sucks. But it's the reality of the film industry now, and *Wonka* is far from the worst offender. I mean, the online public dismissed the film right out of the gate, but apparently we're still stoked for each new Godzilla or Fast and Furious installment? For me, *Wonka* finds some redemption by standing on its own legs as a movie. The story and most of the characters are completely original, and the film very rarely relies on references or callbacks to keep viewers invested. Still, while *Wonka* is not strictly a prequel to any of the existing adaptations, it does clearly harken back to 1971's *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. And this was probably the film's biggest misstep in terms of public reception because it

encouraged people to compare *Wonka* with the beloved classic more than they were going to anyway. I understand why they decided to put "Pure Imagination" in the trailer, but I think they would have ultimately been better off to clearly distinguish the movie as a standalone story.

That being said, I honestly love the story of *Wonka*. I was surprised and impressed with how, despite the plot being completely new, it felt like it could've actually come right out of a Roald Dahl book. Everything felt very aesthetically appropriate, from the setting of an ambiguously magical mid-20th century English city to the cartoonishly over-the-top yet simultaneously realistic villains. Speaking of villains, what a host this movie features! Paterson Joseph kills it as the film's main antagonist, Slugworth. He hams it up and chews the scenery to bits every scene he's in, making for one of the most entertaining family movie villains I've seen in years. Another standout is Keegan-Michael Key as the Chief of Police, who delivers the perfect comedic balance between bumbling incompetence and the genuinely threatening presence of a corrupt justice system.

Wonka doesn't break the mold by any means; it's an underdog story about a penniless dreamer and his scrappy group of friends taking on The Man. But there are some surprises thrown in there. I did not expect Wonka's illiteracy subplot but thought it added an interesting dimension to his character. I definitely didn't expect to get a commentary on the systemic corruption of the police and the church and how they work to prop up the corporate elite, rendered through an economy of chocolate. Not to mention that said church is run by a priest played by Rowan Atkinson and five hundred monks who speak only in Gregorian chant. Oh yeah, and in one of the major action sequences of the third act, Wonka and Co. release a giraffe into the church to distract Mr. Bean priest and the monks – who do indeed express

their panic through more chanting – and break into a secret vault where the chocolate cartel has been embezzling their own chocolate. And all of this is treated as more or less normal. It's amazing.

Oh right, the songs. I personally liked them. The villain song, "Sweet Tooth," is super fun and catchy. I've heard some mock the big show-stopping number, "You've Never Had Chocolate Like This" for not quite pulling off its rhymes (chocolate and *pocke-let*), but I find it charming. And hearing Keegan-Michael Key sing in a New York accent is probably not something you knew you needed, but you do. As for Chalamet, his singing is somehow better, worse, and exactly what I expected, all at once. *Wonka*'s songs definitely aren't its greatest strength, but then again, none of the adaptations' songs really are. I mean, the Gene Wilder version has "Pure Imagination" and the Oompa Loompa songs, sure, but it also has "Cheer Up Charlie" – bleh.

The TL;DR is that this movie really succeeds at being a fun, enjoyable watch. It's not an artistic masterpiece, but it never sets out to be one. And while it's not the best "fun-oriented" movie in recent years (*Bullet Train* takes the cake for me), the ones that top it mostly aren't, let's say, family movies. And that's what really got to me after I left the theater last December. I walked away with a funny but familiar feeling, one I got from the movies I watched as a kid. No new movie had elicited that feeling in me for a long time. Even good movies, ones I like, don't quite seem to capture that same sense of wonderment anymore. The sense that, say, your dreams are the most valuable thing in the world, and that the deliciousness of good chocolate overcomes all. So if you, too, miss that feeling you got when you sat on the couch with your family and a big bowl of popcorn to watch a movie before bedtime, *Wonka* just might scratch that itch for you.



SAM's SHOWTIME SCHEDULE

Samantha “Sam” Guevara
Editor-in-Chief & Film Columnist

As the year comes to a close, reflecting on the new opportunities one has experienced throughout the past year is important. Namely, travelling to new places, meeting new people, growing in new ways, and above all: seeing new movies. In 2024, cinema had a lot to offer me, as from *Paris, Texas* (1984) to *Scream* (1996) or *Challengers* (2024), I had the chance to bear witness to a plethora of films — for better or for worse. (Looking at you *Trainspotting* (1996) and *Poor Things* (2023), respectively). Without further ado, I, a movie critic (*avid Letterboxd user*) and a film scholar (*undergraduate with a cinema minor*) present the tenth issue of this column: **TOP FIRST WATCHES OF 2024**.



Dì Dì/弟弟 (2024)
Dir. Sean Wang

“Mom, are you ashamed of me?”

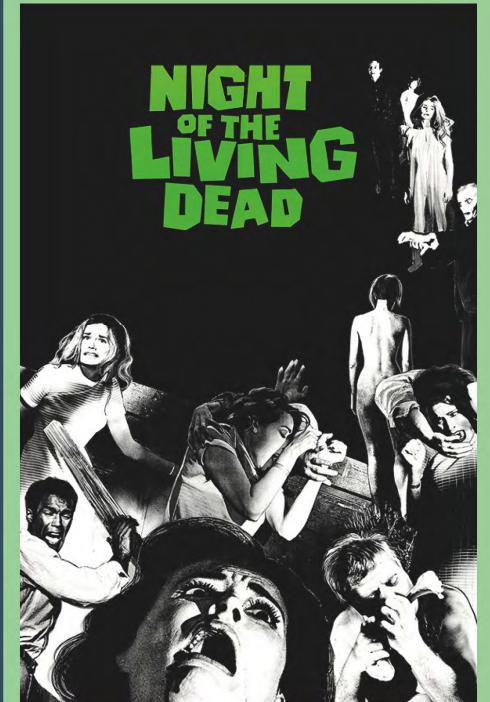
A raw and rapturous feature-length directorial debut following an impressionable and curious 13-year-old Taiwanese American growing up in the Bay Area in the late-2000s. An ode to first-generation teenagers navigating the cheers and chaos of adolescence, and the lengthy learning that comes with it — how to film, how to kiss, how to skate, how to be a friend, and how to make your mother like you.



BROTHER (2022)
Dir. Clement Virgo

“Don’t matter how poor you are, you can always show the world you’re not a nobody.”

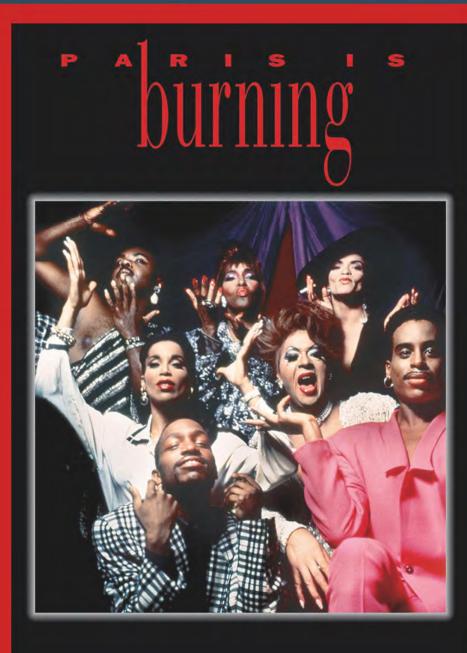
An adaptation of the award-winning novel of the same name by David Chariandy centering on the relationship between Francis and Michael, two Black Canadian brothers coming of age during the early 1990s. A shout out to Scarborough and Toronto, friends and family, kinship and community, and everything that becomes entangled in between from violence to grief or passion to music, all the while shouting out the past and its memories as both a burden and blessing.



NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)
Dir. George A. Romero

“If you have a gun, shoot ‘em in the head.”

An independent first feature that became a horror zombie cult classic showcasing a group of individuals seeking refuge inside an abandoned farmhouse to escape from reanimated corpses, including a Black protagonist going beyond racial stereotypes of the period such as the “Magical Negro.” An offering of revolutionary sociopolitical commentary set in rural Philadelphia, presenting a subtext of the counterculture movement of the 1960s. In particular, although zombies may be a threat to the landscape of America, a bigger threat to Americans is violence, especially racial and military-industrial complex violence.



PARIS IS BURNING (1990)
Dir. Jennie Livingston

“Some of them say that we’re sick, we’re crazy. And some of them think that we are the most gorgeous, special things on Earth.”

HIGH AND LOW/天国と地獄 (1963)
Dir. Akira Kurosawa

“I’d rather be told the cruel truth than be fed gentle lies.”



THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG / دباعم ریجنای نهاد (2024)
Dir. Mohammad Rasoulof

“The world has changed, but God has not. Nor his laws.”





My room of rest and relaxation

A love letter to feng shui

Nora Zolfaghari

OPINION

At its core, feng shui is a set of rules that arranges a room to allow for the flow of energy that leaves the room in balance and harmony. In feng shui there are five elements that should always be in equity, as well as the essence of either yin – for passive spaces – and yang – for active spaces. The tradition dates back to Ancient China, but the purpose of feng shui, I believe, has always existed as a personal instinct outside of the guidelines of the practice. Even if you have no perception at all of the rules of feng shui, you always know when something in a room feels out of place. I personally have always been someone that needs to brace myself for changes in my room. While my friends decorated and redecorated their rooms, rearranging all its contents whenever they got bored, I was never able to just do that on a whim. The angle of my bed against the window was meticulously chosen after years of trial and error, ensuring the best quality of sleep I can while letting the sunlight into my room at full force because I refuse to close my blinds. Like a plant, I need light and space to sprawl. My bookshelf is used only to store the things I collect: rocks, shells, and any print media I refuse to let go of. The place I choose to

put them when I first bring them home is the place they'll always stay. So, my books have no room on the shelves, and instead, have grown their own stacks like an archipelago on my bedroom floor.

Principally, feng shui's energy comes from outside; through windows and doors. The entry of the home is referred to as the mouth, and the passage of energy beyond can be visualized as something of a metabolic process. This energy, then, is sustained through living: eating, breathing, cooking, sleeping. Over the years, sleeping for 11 hours and doing nothing for the rest of the day until you get tired again has somehow become an "unhealthy" or "unproductive" way to live. You're criticized for having bad habits when, in reality, all you're doing is ensuring that energy continues to flow through your home. You're older now, you need somewhere comforting to rest. How else will you be able to do that if you feel profoundly alienated in your own home?

The most daunting part of feng shui, at least for me, is its maintenance. However, I believe that it is well within the guidelines of feng shui to allow your room to develop naturally as you live in the space. When I was younger, when my mom would tell me to clean my room, she'd say that every surface of my room was covered by something – clothes, half-written notes, CDs I meant

to reorganize – like some kind of mold. However, in my 20 long years of life, I've found that there is no better way to reinforce a room's metabolic flow than by having a natural growth of stuff. The moments that I tend to remember the most fondly are the couple of minutes of complete peace right before I fall into what I know is about to be a profoundly soul-adjusting nap. In the summer, I'd lay on my floor to stay cool. I simply cannot close my window because doing so would cause a disturbance in the energy of the room, a stark change that I can feel in my stomach. Instead, I'd lay in front of it, waiting for the wind to pass over me, and every time it did I took a deep enough breath to continue to perpetuate it. One summer, I put up a wind chime so I could actually hear the breeze. Sometimes I'd sleep through the rings, and sometimes I'd be pleasantly awoken by the sound. When I did, I'd reach across the room, eyes still closed, and pick out a book from one of my stacks. Or instead, I'd reach for my laptop to play music, or on some occasions to watch *Children of the Sea* for the umpteenth time. A room with harmonious feng shui should feel as though it has life of its own. You and your space simply exist in each other's company, feel the same warmth from the sun and the same comfort from being in a space that has grown and developed with you.

Although a room with balanced feng shui is grounding, moving away from somewhere you've established can be, at the risk of sounding somewhat dramatic, profoundly devastating. Even going back to visit isn't the same it used to be. However much it may unnerve you, this, unfortunately, is a part of life. There's no way to work around it, the truth of the matter is that feng shui, harmony and balance, they all take time. The mistake that many people will make is to rush the process, yearning for some kind of inner peace to emerge from it. But this is fundamentally antagonistic to what feng shui is supposed to be. Calmness is, by its very definition, is brought about by the recess of haste. As much as we may scramble and hope for a moment of rest, it is not something that we can control outright. The perfect space will happen eventually. Home is not something to leave behind but something to build and look forward to, no matter where you go and regardless of what you do. As you continue to live your life, your spaces will change with you, and eventually, they'll become an extension of you; all of your earthly possessions and napping spots all in one place. In the end, I can't really say that anything I know about feng shui is truly about feng shui. But what I do know is that space can be an intimidating thing. However, if you happen to feel an energy flowing through a room, wherever you are, sit and bask in it. No one will notice it, but it just might help you rest a bit easier.

The Doctor is In

Kiran Basra

OPINION

Due to Ontario's concerning shortage of family doctors, I have been assigned as your official healthcare professional. Don't worry, I'm totally qualified. Today's topic: staying healthy.

I am defining health as maintaining a body that is comfortable to exist in, and creating good habits so that your body stays comfortable as you age. I recognize that the conventional definition of health is associated with athletes and models, but those are people who use their bodies for very specific purposes and work professionally to create a body that looks that way. They are not realistic bodies for anyone who has a job. In addition, many disabilities preclude someone from a body that is comfortable to exist in. Unfortunately, that's outside the scope of this article; I would suggest finding another doctor just as qualified as I am to answer your personalized questions.

Onto your questions!

How can I lose weight?

Honestly? In most cases, you probably can't. If you look like your parents or other relatives did at your age, then

your weight is likely determined largely by your genes. Weight loss is so difficult because your body will fight against you every step of the way. It doesn't realize we aren't living in caveman times; to it, your fat means protection from cold and starvation. This is especially true if you're female; since your body is constantly begging you to have a baby (don't listen, girl, your education comes first!) it requires your body to have enough fat to keep that fetus alive, should it develop. Skipping meals, doing cleanses, and taking diet teas will just convince your body it needs to hang onto it harder.

But isn't that bad? Aren't fat people unhealthy?

It is true that people with more body mass are more likely to suffer from heart attacks and other cardiac dysfunctions. Simply, there is more body to pump blood through, so your heart has to work harder. I won't deny that weighing less is better for your heart. I just think that the act of trying to lose weight is often pseudoscience, useless at best and severely damaging to your physical and mental health at worst. Ozempic and keto diets are terrible for you. Eating disorders are very easy to obtain, occur more often in plus-size people than thin people, and are more fatal than any other psychiatric disorder. We all know the weight-loss industry is predatory and tries to make people hate themselves. Instead of struggling to engage with "the good parts" of it without letting the bad ones harm us... why don't we just call it rotten, ignore it, and try to define health separately from thinness?

So I can do whatever I want and nothing bad will ever happen to me?

Not true. Building good exercise and eating habits now will give you a good quality of life for a longer period of your life. Since they will be tricky to enforce, the sooner you start them, the easier they will be to continue throughout your life.

1. **Eat when you're hungry and stop when you aren't hungry anymore.** Everyone needs a different amount of food, so you can only listen to your own body.
2. **Eat a plant with every meal.** Doesn't matter what the plant is, or what the meal is. Having poutine and an apple for lunch is better than just having poutine, and way better than not eating anything.
3. **Move your body.** It doesn't matter how—we aren't trying to sculpt our abs, just vary our heart rate. There is no need to do anything boring or painful, so don't suffer through pushups or jogging because you've heard it burns calories and builds muscle, unless you like the way it feels.
4. **Drink water.** There's literally no shortcut to this one. Just do it. It solves 95% of your problems.
5. **Sleep every day.** Just like with food, everyone needs a different amount at a different time. Listen to your body!

See you next time for more practical, attainable health advice. And remember, kids—smoking may be sexy, but living without cancer is even sexier!

Wake Up, U of T

A Call for Balance and Wellness on Campus

Katherine Chen

OPINION

The typical U of T student experience is not one without mental and physical torment. Long hours of sitting at the desk, constant pressure from wave after wave of impending deadlines, a dire sense of competition with everyone who seems to be doing better than you, a feeling of burnout that's the default state of affairs – university is unquestionably not for the faint of heart. There is something damningly tragic about this state of affairs, and how mental health is always sacrificed for academic success.

Tangible consequences arise from the backbreaking lifestyle students are forced into to keep up academically. Long work hours are strongly linked to many negative health consequences, according to recent evidence from a meta-analysis published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. One of the major health issues linked to long workdays is sleep disturbance, which includes short sleep duration. The study points to a higher risk of a number of mental and physical health conditions, including chronic fatigue, mental health disorders, and cardiovascular diseases. A cycle of exhaustion is thus introduced: overwork and high stress from rigorous academic demands often lead to diminishing returns, where students are less productive and retain less, perpetuating the cycle of needing to work even harder to catch up.

Hustle culture, which is fueled by capitalist notions of achievement and self-reliance, exalts relentless work as the path to prestige and success. This narrative romanticizes overworking as a personal virtue and a public performance, sometimes associating one's value with production. It is widely accepted in industries such as technology, banking, and academia. Silicon Valley exemplifies this culture, portraying all-consuming dedication as essential to innovation and greatness. Amplified by social media, hustle culture has turned work into a status symbol, suggesting that the dream job demands total devotion, blurring the line between passion and exhaustion.

I thus propose an alternative culture of rest. The two main parts are promoting rest and balance and advocating wellness-centered campus policies. The current grind culture takes us down a glorified hellish downward spiral of never-ending work and anxiety to overachieve. Let the culture of rest do students justice.

Instead of sleep deprivation and burnout being presented as bizarre trophies, picture rest, self-care, and balance being recognized as indicators of maturity and responsibility. As the new badge of honour, students should begin to normalize rest, exercise, a balanced diet, and enough sleep. We should start bragging about doing yoga and meditation and other wellness exercises. We should be proud if we got our full eight hours of sleep the previous night. The intention is to foster an atmosphere in which balance and rest are valued rather than ridiculed.

We could pioneer a social media campaign to spotlight students who are ambassadors of wellness and balance. The campaign would involve the experiences of students who have found fulfillment in various activities outside of academics and reconciled self-actualization and societal pressures to be conventionally successful. This would make balance more socially prevalent and widely accepted.

We might also begin encouraging wellness behaviours using several strategies.

Under a "WellCoins" system, students would participate and earn points taking part in events such as wellness seminars, intramural sports, meditation sessions, and other activities promoting self-care. These points could be exchanged for gift cards for wellness-related products, discounts at the school gyms or bookshop, and discounts at the dining halls. A student may choose to team up with a friend to do wellness activities together, such as planning healthy meals, tracking regular walks, or attending a designated amount of yoga classes. Rewards might be personalized for every couple, such as discounts on sports event tickets or exercise equipment. Within this system, U of T may collaborate with wellness businesses to give students involved in mindful activities free or discounted memberships and apply savings on health-related subscriptions like online gym classes and meal planning applications.

The other aspect of this rest culture would concern wellness-centered campus policies. Self-compassionate deadline extensions would allow each U of T student a set number of flexible deadlines per semester without penalty. This acknowledges that life can interfere with academics and removes the stigma of asking for extra time. Similarly, U of T could designate "homework-light weekends" where no assignments are due on Mondays, and no extra unofficial work or readings are assigned over the weekends to give students more time and space to

keep up with existing workloads. This would help students better account for their mental and physical well-being during times of high stress and give students some breathing space to reconcile their academic performance with lives outside of school.

This is what a day in a rest-focused U of T could look like for students.

Morning: A Gentle Start and Deliberate Routine

A typical weekday morning. Thanks to disciplined, reasonable deadlines, which have helped them finish their work earlier in the day, students are well-rested instead of waking sleep-deprived and grumpy following a late-night study session. Every course starts after 10 a.m., so those needing more sleep can start their day right. To help mental clarity before classes, some students begin their day with a mindfulness program offered on campus or gentle yoga in a dedicated wellness area.

Class Engagement and the Role of Faculty in Student Success

In a rest-focused environment, classes are designed to promote engagement with course content without excessive workload. Professors prioritize active learning through discussions, group projects, and interactive activities rather than overloading students with readings or assignments. In place of endless lectures, classes focus on deep comprehension and student involvement, allowing students to leave class feeling enriched rather than overwhelmed. Faculty could adopt teaching methods that build reflection into each lesson, allowing students to process and apply their learning.

Evening: Meaningful Leisure Time

Most days, students can end classes with plenty of time to enjoy dinner, hang out with friends, or pursue interests without feeling like they must immediately return to homework. Projects and homework assignments are scheduled to be realistic so that nights can be free of over-demanding deadlines and students can unwind. Attending wellness events would be considered a respectable investment in well-being, integral to a successful and balanced academic life.

Nevertheless, the main driver of grind culture is the present educational system; hence, the alternative culture of rest should also aim to reform our present system such that it will equip students with the necessary skillset to achieve their goals and be more ready to contribute to society.

Courses could include experiential and project-based learning into more material through real-world collaborations that link students with companies, nonprofits, or community organizations so they may work on practical issues. Courses may also include capstone projects to prompt students to apply what they have learned in a meaningful way via multimedia projects, research papers, or community-based activities instead of tests or through term papers. U of T could also offer field experiences integrating knowledge and learning methodologies calling for students to collaborate across disciplines. Focusing on difficult, real-world tasks, this method teaches holistically and allows students to grow in critical thinking and flexibility.

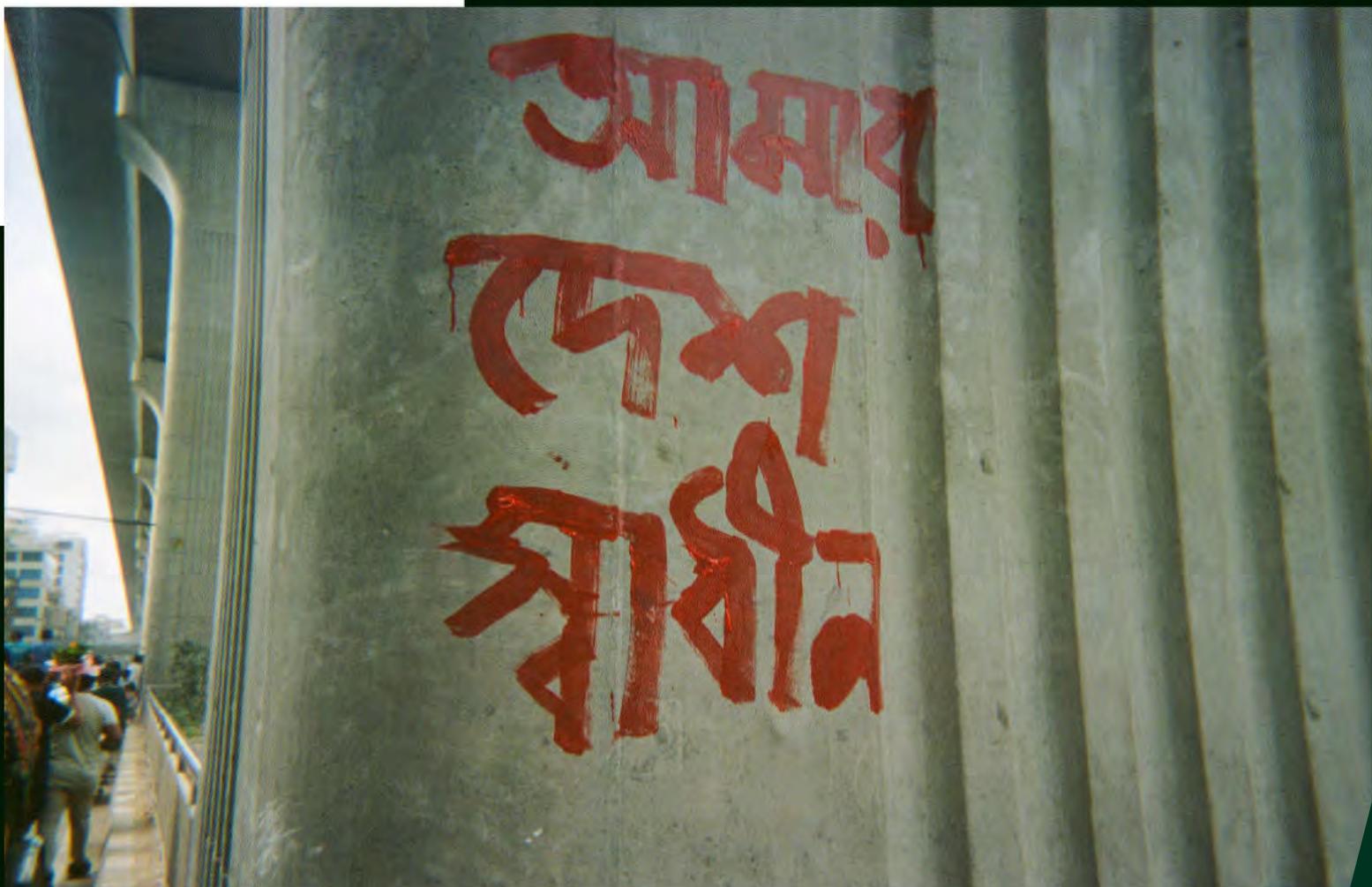
There are many benefits to a rest-positive academic culture. Rested students have better cognitive functions and retain information more effectively. According to a study published by *npj Science of Learning*, "better quality, longer duration and greater consistency of sleep are strongly associated with better academic performance in college." Hence, prioritizing balance in university prepares students for healthier, more sustainable professional and personal lives. Furthermore, a relaxed academic environment may foster better social connections and a more supportive campus culture where mutual empowerment rather than cutthroat competition is at the forefront of our minds.

Creating a culture prioritizing wellness and balance at this university is possible. However, it starts with prioritizing your health and taking small steps toward creating a more balanced environment. Act by advocating for policies with student councils and faculty, leveraging current mental health services, and connecting with peers who share a commitment to wellness.

Ultimately, as clichéd as this may sound, it's up to you, the reader, to take tangible action to improve your well-being at U of T. It may seem that there is no way out of the cutthroat competition and perpetual stress that grind culture has created. We live in a society where superficial displays of wealth and status feed into our egos driven to conform and appear successful. Having grown up all our lives in said society, we have fallen asleep and grown numb to social conventions that we may not even have wanted to attain in the first place but have since given in to. Let university be the place you wake up. Let it be where you challenge accepted wisdom and consider what is important to you and your own life mission. The opportunity is thus with us here and now to build a U of T campus and future society that will fit our demands for balance and well-being.

5th of August

Tahir Soumen
PHOTOGRAPHY



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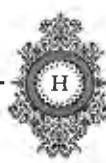




11



These are pictures I took on my disposable camera, a Kodak FunSaver, on the fifth of August, the day when the corrupt regime was overthrown in Bangladesh. These pictures document the raw, unfiltered celebration of people reclaiming the future for themselves, and their country.



Doug Ford vs. Toronto

The Province's Meddling in City Affairs

Kyle Newcombe

POLITICS

Every time a news story breaks where Doug Ford and the Ontario provincial government are once again meddling in Toronto politics, I wonder if it will be the one that leads the city and its citizens past their collective breaking point. I now feel like we're getting there, not because of any story in particular, but rather because of just how many examples of this behaviour are now out there.

We've seen Doug Ford's rather blatant corruption at the provincial level for years: the proposed opening of Greenbelt land and the construction of Highway 413 that stood to benefit his developer friends, the sheer size of his cabinet to shore up support within his own party, and the immediate promotion of newly elected conservative MPPs in order to increase their salaries. We've now also seen much of the same behaviour at the local level here in Toronto. I spoke about this phenomenon in the venerable pages of this very newspaper last year, when I wrote about Toronto's mayoral by-election following the resignation of John Tory. Doug Ford inserted himself right into the thick of it, saying "if a left-wing mayor gets in there, we're toast. I'll tell you, it'd be a disaster."

Partisan election interference is one thing, but now the provincial government's actions have begun to take a toll on specific local issues. The Ontario Science Centre was closed under dubious circumstances, after Doug Ford has said for years that he wants to move it to Ontario Place. While Ontario Place is owned by the provincial government, their continuance with a project that will bring a luxury spa to the area is certainly not benefiting the plurality of Toronto residents, and has already resulted in the removal of 865 trees. This was all

preceded by the 2018 size reduction of Toronto's city council forced by the provincial government, in stark contrast to Ford's almost doubling of the size of his own cabinet since then.

The most recent issue that has really brought the provincial government's incessant meddling in Toronto's municipal issues back to the fore is the spat over bike lanes on major Toronto streets. It all began heating up earlier this fall when local residents and representatives clashed over the new bike lanes on Bloor Street West, which served as a flashpoint that elevated the issue beyond a neighbourhood dispute. The provincial government now wants to force the city to remove all bike lanes from University Avenue, Bloor Street, and Yonge Street. All new bike lane projects that remove car lanes would also need provincial approval. All of this bickering over bike and car lanes on streets that have some of the continent's best used subway lines directly underneath them is itself utterly ridiculous, but such is politics in Toronto.

The province's simplistic framing of the issue also really bothers me. "Bike lanes increase traffic congestion" is a highly contested statement, and a *Toronto Star* analysis only showed modest improvements in travel times on Bloor Street without bike lanes in place. The infrastructure improvements the city is making are also not just about bike lanes; we can see this very clearly just down the street at St. George and Bloor. Bike lanes have been better separated from traffic, new protected intersections have been installed, and signal timings have been adjusted. This is about pedestrian access and safety just as much as it's about bike lanes. The bike lane debate on University Avenue in particular is completely absurd; there remain two or three car travel lanes in each direction and there is somehow still on-street

parking on this major thoroughfare. Heading north past Queens Park, you run into another major cause of congestion that isn't bike lanes: the construction to make Museum Station on Line 1 accessible has traffic down to just one travel lane in each direction, while the bike lanes are closed.

The question you might be asking yourself is: how is this behaviour from the province even legal? Many of us who have completed the civics curriculum in Ontario schools are no doubt harkening back to the lessons on which level of government is responsible for a given service or piece of infrastructure. Indeed, building and maintaining roads, including the installation and removal of bike lanes, falls squarely in the municipal category. Unfortunately, this is only by convention, not by statute. The Canadian constitution's only reference to cities and their governments is that cities are "of the provinces." What this means in practice is that cities cannot adopt charters of their own, and provinces can pretty much do whatever they want with respect to the municipalities in their territory. This is in contrast to the United States: municipal governments similarly have all of their powers granted to them by states, but many cities can adopt their own charters, leading to stronger and more independent local governance.

Unfortunately, this means that meddling in Toronto's affairs is likely to continue to be a mainstay of provincial policy. And just to be clear, this isn't about the particular person or party that is currently engaged in the practice; I'm politically agnostic. There's no doubt in my mind that the Liberals or the NDP would engage in similar behaviour, but perhaps not to the same extent and with respect to different issues (for example: the Liberal government blocked the city from instituting tolls on the Gardiner Expressway in 2016, despite the

highway being a municipal responsibility at the time). I've always wondered aloud why so many state capitals in the US are in small cities that don't really register with people when they think of that state (Springfield, IL and Jefferson City, MO are two examples that come to mind). I now see some of the potential benefits: by keeping state lawmakers out of your large city, hopefully they leave you alone policy-wise (although Gov. Kathy Hochul's continued interference in Manhattan's congestion pricing scheme is a pointed example of this effect not working).

What are the solutions then? It doesn't sound particularly glamorous, but our best path forward is continued civic engagement and voting (when the time comes). With respect to bike lanes, I should note that not all Toronto residents disagree with Doug Ford on this issue, and many do support the removal of bike lanes. It's therefore important that all of us who do support bike lanes make our voices heard. The fact that the conservative provincial government is meddling with Toronto's bike lanes while their same party, under Mike Harris, was the one that offloaded the Gardiner Expressway to the city as an explicit cost-saving measure in 1997 (when highways are clearly a *provincial responsibility*) is a complete farce. The same party that shirked its responsibility on highways is now preaching on local transportation thinking that they alone know what's best for the city. Meanwhile the Eglinton Crosstown, constructed by the province for the city of Toronto, is now entering its fourteenth year of construction with no opening date in sight. Perhaps the province doesn't actually know what they're doing with respect to local issues in Toronto. Citizens of this city must continue to make their voices heard so that we foster the urban environment that we want, not the one prescribed for us by the provincial government.



The Psychology Behind Cuffing Season

Michelle ZHW
SCIENCE

As the days shorten, air gets crisp, and puffers come out, many start looking for more than just pumpkin spice lattes to warm up—like a partner to get spicy with. Enter cuffing season—the time between fall and first quarter of the following year, where holidays arrive back to back and couples seem to pop up everywhere on campus but start disappearing after Valentine's. Cuffing season is more than a simple observation, and data backs it up: a 2019 Dating.com survey found a 30 percent spike in user activity between November and February, and 60 percent reported their motives in participating in online dating to ease feelings of sadness and anxiety [1]. Though snuggling up with your newfound boo can certainly warm you up during these tough Canadian winters, the heartbreak that unveils itself from all the holiday glamor can be tough to handle. So what exactly is the reason behind the annual mass migration into temporary relationships?

One huge factor is social comparison. As the holidays approach, we are bombarded with images of couples; from formal family gatherings to intimate mistletoe moments, social media is filled with images of love and lust. But all this couple-centric cheer can make singles feel left out or crave companionship—even if they're

happier in solo player mode—leading to a desire to fulfill this social expectation by bringing a partner home to friends and family to show off. Then there's the classic “beer goggle effect” [2] where intoxication increases sexual attraction, making that one dude across the room at your neighbor's Christmas party seem just a little too fine. So watch out if you're downing one too many hot toddies; you might end up on Todd the hottie. On top of that, the holidays also just generally boost interest in romance and intimacy, with many studies finding that both interest and engagement in sex increase during the snowy holidays [3].

Biological shifts also play a big role. In the darker, colder months, testosterone levels in men tend to rise, which can increase partner and sex-seeking drives [4]. During kissing, snuggles or freaky times, oxytocin, the “bonding hormone,” increases greatly for all sexes. Though this hormone is commonly seen as a love and sex hormone, oxytocin can also reduce stress and anxiety as it inhibits cortisol (stress hormone) production [5]. This may be why this oxytocin boost can be espe-

cially appealing in winter months where stressors—such as holiday gatherings with that one racist uncle, and of course, end-of-year exams—lurk around every corner.

Cuffing season can be tough for all of us who don't put romance at the top of our to-do lists, but with all the social pressure and couples on campus, a holiday relationship doesn't sound so bad, does it? Now, I'm not here to keep you from getting out your rose coloured glasses for a whirlwind romance, but before jumping headfirst, perhaps consider what your goals are for the cuffing season and communicate them to your partner(s). A cuffing season fling could be fun for all parties as long as there's consent, so consider discussing what would happen after Valentine's to avoid unnecessary heartbreak when those roses wilt. But hey, if you're simply seeking character development this cuffing season: go wild.

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Twilight of the Big Three

The Sportist

SPORTS

Men's professional tennis is in the in-between right now. For the first time in 23 years, the ATP Finals took place without either Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, or Novak Djokovic in the mix. Instead, we are left with the likes of Jannik "carrot boy" Sinner and Carlos "Carlitos" Alcaraz; a pair of wunderkinds with a lot to prove. I believe it folly to even attempt measuring them up to The Big Three; they are their own competitors, it would hardly be constructive.

A general rule of thumb in my book is to avoid directly comparing different generations of sporting disciplines because everything is in constant motion. The rules change, technology advances – this is only natural. However, it could be argued that tennis is a special case. For some reason or another, the same three people have largely dominated the men's tennis scene for an unnaturally long period of time. The only reason their reign is ending soon is the simple fact that the human body can only do so much for so long. Tennis is an extremely physical sport – some matches lasting over 5 hours – but time seems to have finally caught up with them, and rest beckons these tennis titans to lay down their racquet arms and join the ranks of former professional tennis players.

As such, I feel that it would be interesting to look back at some of what The Big Three have managed to accomplish in their shared dominant era and pay tribute to something we might never witness again. Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, and Novak Djokovic: nearly two decades of men's singles tennis has been shaped by the rivalries between them. No doubt they will eventually be inducted into the Tennis Hall of Fame, but for now, dear reader, a short trip back to the past is in order.

Let's take a quick detour before we crunch the numbers. Here's a crash course on the season's format:

THE ATP TOUR

The Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) is the governing body for men's professional tennis. They handle the rankings, points, tournaments, all that jazz. A season of tennis (the ATP Tour) generally lasts for about a full calendar year, and spans over 60 tournaments on three different court surfaces (clay, grass, hard) around the globe – split into four levels. There's the ATP 250s, 500s, and Masters 1000s (where the number denotes the number of points gained for winning the respective tournaments) but the statistical focus will be on the fourth and highest level, the Grand Slam, which awards 2000 points. I have elected to ignore the ATP Finals (tournament for the year-end top eight players) as a measure of accomplishment because,

frankly, it isn't worth mentioning. Take the Grand Slams as the essays/midterms worth 60% of your grade, and the other tournaments as weekly tutorial quizzes.

There are four Grand Slam tournaments, consisting of two weeks of play for each. To win the whole thing, you'll have to win in a single-elimination, knockout bracket-style draw of 128 players, the aim being to advance to the final (about seven matches total). The first Grand Slam is the Australian Open (hard court), played in Melbourne at the beginning of the year. Following that is the French Open a.k.a. Roland Garros (clay court), in Paris, France. Next is Wimbledon (grass court), played in London, where until recently everyone had to wear full white kit (highly traditional). Finally, the US Open (hard court), in New York closes out the run for the year. We do not need to get into the nitty-gritty of how everything works, but the message I hope to convey is that winning a single Grand Slam is extremely difficult. The Big Three have won a combined total of 66, nearly evenly shared between them. They have warped what it means to have a good tennis career, creating unreal expectations for those who follow after and ridiculous comparisons to those who came before.

THE END IS NEAR

The end of this year marks the beginning of the latter third of the end of the reign of The Big Three in men's tennis during the Open Era. Roger played his last professional match in 2022 – to a teary ensemble at the Laver Cup in London, United Kingdom. Rafa played his last match at the Davis Cup Finals in Málaga, Spain – representing his country one last time. Nole pulled out of the ATP Finals in Turin, Italy this year on account of an elbow injury – some might say an omen of his impending retirement as well.

There was a time when I believed all three would still be duking it out on the court by the time we reached net-zero carbon emissions, but alas, there is evidence to the contrary. Whether I like it or not, over 20 years of pure dominance is ending soon. Tennis players have grown up watching them, they were inspired to turn pro because of them, they have gotten smacked around by them, and several have been forced to bow out in deferential retirement courtesy of this unquestionable dominance. The "Lost Gen," the "Old Next Gen," and the "New Next Gen" all took turns getting walloped by a trio of old geezers at some point. In some other timeline, the likes of Milos Raonic, Stanislas Wawrinka, and Kei Nishikori might have had more titles to their names. Let us not forget the Scottish tragedy (comparatively) of Shakespearean calibre that was Sir Andy Murray's career (the highs were high and the lows were low). For some reason Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas

are fading from the spotlight. Alcaraz and Sinner, the more promising pair, are sharing the Grand Slams for this year, two apiece. What these two have already accomplished at their ages is incredible. Generally speaking, everything the Big Three has done has to be looked at as separate from the rest of the Tour.

Let me be real with you, all these other players mentioned and not are excellent in their own right, they just fell victim to unfortunate timing. But enough of that, let's visit the main attraction.

WHO ARE THE BIG THREE?

After all that, allow me to present to you – in my most humble, heavily tennis-leaning professional armchair pundit opinion – the masterminds behind the greatest run of sporting dominance in the 21st century. There may never be an era so definitive as that of the Big Three, and it is bittersweet to see it end. We are in the last legs of this truly

incredible era, but we mourn not because we have lost what we love, but because we love what we have lost.

Quick disclaimer: these three have their fair share of controversies (some more than others), but I call them "great" based purely on their achievements in the sport, not necessarily as human beings.

The Gentleman

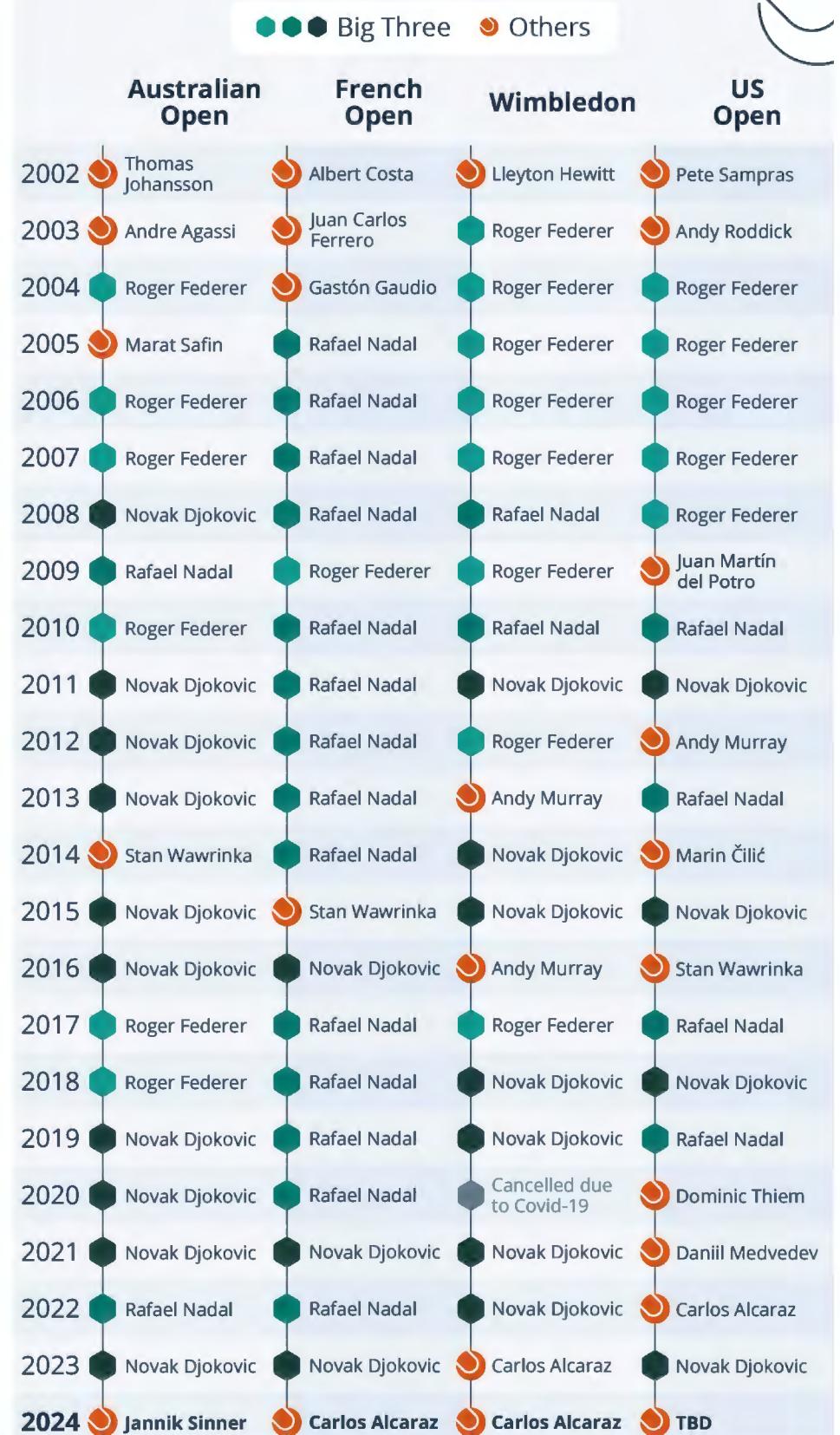
From the city on the Rhine: The King, The Swiss Maestro, also known as Roger Federer. Notable for having a tram named after him (The Federer Express) in Basel, Switzerland. Also, he is the first person to be pictured on Swiss stamps and coins while still living. This man single-handed backhandedly transformed tennis into a sport of grace and beauty, that glorious slice would bring anyone to tears. Being a retired professional, nowadays one can find him com-

(continued on next page)

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The End of the 'Big Three' Era

Men's singles Grand Slam champions since 2002



pling side quests like touring Switzerland by train with Trevor Noah and appearing in tourism ads with Anne Hathaway and Mads Mikkelsen. He is the oldest of The Three, and the first to retire. Well-known for his clinical game and “+10 Elegance-Up” effect when in the vicinity of strawberries and cream as well as freshly cut grass in southwest London (we don’t talk about Wimbledon 2019), Roger could always be counted on to play the most glorious of shots with finesse. The Swiss with his tailored image and immaculate one-handed backhand, Federer is the only player to win three different Grand Slam tournaments at least five times, with a total of 20 to his name.

The Unstoppable Force

From the island of Mallorca: Rafa, the raging bull, King of Clay, also known as Rafael Nadal Parera. One of his most distinguishable achievements: appearing in Shakira’s music video as a love interest for the song “Gypsy” in 2010. He also has a 3-metre-tall statue of himself that was erected on site at Roland Garros in 2021 despite still being an

active player, because he was just that good (we don’t talk about Australian Open 2019). This man has left-handedly terrorised the clay courts for over two decades, establishing surface statistics that are quite frankly insulting to the rest of the tour. I would like to imagine his internal dialogue when facing a victim on Court Philippe-Chatrier went something like: “Ah, you think clay is your ally? You merely adopted the red soil. I was born in it, moulded by it. I didn’t see the grass courts until I was already a man, by then it was nothing to me but slippery.” The Spaniard with his “Hola à todos” and sling-shot of a debilitating topspin, Nadal holds the record for the most wins at a single Grand Slam event by any player in tennis history, with a total of 22 under his belt.

The Immovable Wall

From a pizzeria in Kopaonik: Nole, The Djoker, Bert Critchley, also known as Novak Djokovic. Well-known for having a species of beetle and aquatic snail named after him (*Duvalius djokovici* and *Travunijana djokovici* respectively) and appearing in Martin

Solveig & Dragonette’s music video for the song “Hello” in 2010. Sure, his return game is unbelievably good, but the Djokosmash is his greatest weapon. The number of times he has come from a set or two down and methodically disassembled his opponents is uncomfortably high (we don’t talk about US Open 2021). In the shady corners of the tennis fandom, an apt summary regarding the way all of his matches go is, “First he takes your legs, then he takes your soul.” The Serb with his gymnastics and delightful backhand-down-the-line, Djokovic is the only man in tennis history to be the reigning champion of all four majors at once across three different surfaces, with a total of 24 and counting.

I searched diligently (about a minute or so) for a music video from 2010 that included Roger Federer to no avail – but that is beside the point. Since Wimbledon 2003, they have won nearly 80% of the Grand Slams held.

WHAT NOW?

Of the three, only one remains. The key to Djokovic’s success has been his longevity, his endurance beyond that of the other two. He has remained largely injury-

free throughout his career and the results speak for themselves. At his age, Nadal and Federer were beginning to wane – past their prime – but Novak can still be seen steam-rolling opponents nearly twenty years younger. This season, despite not winning a single title for the first time since 2006, he made deep runs into most majors, won the Olympic gold medal, and essentially completed tennis. Next year, I predict a comeback of epic proportions (at least that is the vibe I am getting from the esteemed delusional echo chambers of r/tennis). The age of the Big Three is not over yet, near the end as we may be, it would be wise not to forget.

There is a certain level of sad beauty to the way this chapter is closing. Roger Federer was the first to join and the first to leave. Rafael Nadal was his rival in the early days and then Novak Djokovic came on the scene. The dynamic ebb and flow between them has been a privilege to witness, and as the dust settles and their places in the Tennis Hall of Fame are solidified, I am left wondering whether I will ever be this invested in the sport again.

P.S. Djokovic recently hired Andy Murray to coach him so 2025 go brrr I guess



After the Buzzer

Julian Apolinario

SPORTS

Hello! I’m Julian, one of the Herald’s Creative Directors! For this column, I want to take off my masthead hat and put on my Raptors cap to give updates and share my feelings on the world of sports. News in the athletics space can change at the drop of a hat, especially concerning winning streaks or statistics, so that must be considered when reading the following. This article’s description of team standings are accurate as of November 21, 2024. Without further ado, let’s talk about what happened, after the buzzer...

Basketball

Where would a sports column in Toronto be without discussing the Raptors, our most successful team of the 21st century? This year saw the return of our purple jerseys, a throwback to the early 2000s; something I’m quite a fan of. What I’m not so hot on is seeing our lineup gutted: Raps’ star forward Scottie Barnes is out of commission, as well as our starting point guard, Immanuel Quickley. However, this has provided an opportunity for sophomore Gradey Dick to truly set up and cement himself as a capable player when given more minutes. However,

inconsistency has wracked the team, and losses are piling up quickly. While this may allow us a high chance of drafting great prospects like college standout Cooper Flagg (who nearly defeated a LeBron-James-led Olympic team over the summer), it does not make for pleasant basketball to watch. Hopefully a change can be made to our win/loss record, and if not, Toronto may still be able to Capture the Flagg. This year also saw Raptors legend, Vince Carter, have his jersey retired, the first in franchise history. I was in attendance at Scotiabank Arena while Carter wept tears of emotion during the ceremony, as his legacy was enshrined forever in Toronto.

Baseball

As the MLB season came to a close with the World Series, I was excited for the potential of a Subway Series between the New York Yankees and the New York Mets. Alas, the Los Angeles Dodgers and Shohei Ohtani stole that pleasure from me. I still remember last year, when Toronto was in the sweepstakes to land Ohtani after his flight from the Los Angeles Angels. Instead, the Japanese phenomenon went across town to great success, helping to lead the Dodgers to a World Series Victory in 5 games, winning 4-1. At heart, I’m an East Coast guy,

so my heart broke a little seeing the Yankees lose, even though I’m usually not much one for America’s pastime.

Gridiron Football

Looking at the NFL, the incumbent Super Bowl Champion, Kansas City Chiefs, have continued their reign of terror, winning 9 games straight. More than halfway through the football season, the Chiefs remain at the forefront of Super Bowl contention, though not without challengers. The Detroit Lions squad seems to be continuing last year’s success, boasting a spectacular record, currently tied with the Chiefs. I don’t have an NFL team I root for personally – though I do love the occasional Tyreek Hill highlight – but my former neighbour was from Detroit, and I picked up enough admiration for the long frustrated Motor City fans to want their team to do well. As much as it would interest me to see Patrick Mahomes capture his third straight Super Bowl ring and begin to develop a real case against Tom Brady for the best quarterback of the 21st century, those Lions have been so bad, for so long. I like to think that they’re due a little good luck.

Association Football

The Madison Avenue Pub exploded when I was there last. Not because of the alcohol, but because of the cheers of the Red Devils watching Manchester United win the FA cup against Manchester City under former manager Erik ten Hag. In retrospect, last year’s triumph would be nothing more than a final victory lap for him. United, far removed from its former glory under Sir Alex Ferguson, has brought on a new manager in the form of the former coach of Sporting Lisbon, Ruben Amorim.

Regarding Spanish football, the transfer of superstar Kylian Mbappé to Real Madrid has not had the presumed effect. Mbappé has looked out of place away from Paris Saint-Germain, and the superstar is in an awkward position alongside his new teammate Vinicius Jr; despite the team being loaded with stars, including Jude Bellingham, they are still second in the league behind FC Barcelona. Vinicius himself was passed over for the Ballon d’Or, football’s MVP award, going to Manchester City’s Rodri instead.

Ice Hockey

While I’ve never been much one for hockey (he said, unpatriotically), seeing the Carolina Panthers near the top of the standings is nothing I’m too happy about. Robbing Canada, the Edmonton Oilers, and Connor McJesus of the Stanley Cup, and keeping a similar pace this year is upsetting to me. On the other hand, seeing the Winnipeg Jets do as well as they have, as a hockey outsider, has puzzled me. And yet, leading the league with 19 wins and 32 points is really nothing to sneeze at. They have a slightly comfortable lead over any other team in the standings. Seeing the Maple Leafs first in the Atlantic Division is also a small mercy. While I know every year is “our year,” and I’m not holding my breath until I see us get out of the Second Round, it’s nice to see your team not totally suck in the regular season.

It’s been an exciting few months, and the world of sports never stops churning. Until next time—keep your stick on the ice. Finally, special thanks to Alex Pilling for his invaluable knowledge of the world of football.



brat rot girl? rich girl? brat. rot. girl? messy. clean. messy? white. skinny...

something something something brat-summer substack post. Mo' money, mo' problems or something like that

xarnah, although this is *not* autobiographical. I've never done drugs, smoked a cigarette, idk what weed is and also what is alcohol. Please hire me, jesus christ. I'm a riot...

CREATIVE

Aritzia tracksuit, pilates, car insurance, rent, food, groceries, more food, presto fares, new shoes, drinks – Cosmo, rum and coke, Long Island iced tea, a Heineken, two please; one for me and one for her; no, she's my friend, not my girlfriend, although we should be – tuition and again next semester, and again the semester after. OSAP, where are you? UTAPS, please don't let me down. Hey, where are my awards and scholarships, I worked my ass off last year for you to give me nothing? I should have dropped out a while ago. Why? More money for drinks – a Corona with a lime, tequila shot with a lime, can I have a hit of your vape? Do you want to go smoke a cigarette, hey... wanna bump one in the bathroom? Wait, no, they're playing "360" by Charli, let's go dance. God, I hate Rebel. God, I hate the Maddy. Crews *again*? They charge a fortune for a Smirnoff. This one's on me.

You grimace – you've got negative dollars in your bank account and your credit card is about to max out. But why think about that now? You need to get a pack of ciggies, and what's a night without a fat joint to top it off?

You're the only one of your friends that worries about it the next day. You don't want to come off as a cheapskate so you don't think about how much money you spent on your friends and how little they spent on you. You're the only one of your friends that spends most Friday and Saturday nights at work. It's a treat when you get to go out, and you try to go biweekly (the same time you get paid). So, what is this phenomenon? A thirst for going out despite the ruins of a horrible financial situation. Is it because of the Culture or because you like going out? Or is it a secret third thing: a little bit of both and a secret ingredient?

What does it mean to be broke but want to go clubbing? What does it mean to put yourself into financial debt just to have one night out where you forget about all the bills you have to pay? Ever been at risk of being kicked out because you spent your rent money on a couple of drinks at Apt 200? Ever skipped a week's worth of groceries just so you could get high, party at Sneaky Dee's or Century, and then get some shawarma poutine across the street? If clubbing is NOT about hooking up for you and you just want to do cocaine in the bathroom, this is the article for you.

Okay, so, we are now officially in a post-Brat Summer society (Halloweekend is officially *over*, the last big hooray of 2024 other



than New Year's Eve) and the ramifications of it are *stark*. Evidence? I have nothing left in my bank account. To be exact, I have -\$20 left on my debit card and I'm \$2,000 in debt on my credit card (and that's the max but let's see how much further I can go before the IRS gets me...).

For those of you who missed it (*how could you?*), Brat Summer can be summarized in a couple of words: rich people's cocaine, New York Fashion Week clubbing clothes, "Spring breakers" by Charli XCX, "Rush" by Troye Sivan, neon green, Arial font, starving yourself to fit into those pants, finding yourself in someone else's bed, Balenciaga top, TikTok shop, a little bit of racism, TikTok, comparing yourself on TikTok, bodychecking, skinny girl's cocaine, cigarettes and coffee as appetite-suppressants.

Oh, wait, sorry, we're not supposed to say that.

Let me start over, Brat Summer was the direct antithesis to Barbiehemier and the Clean Girl. If you don't know what Brat Summer means, those other words are probably gibberish too. Barbiehemier was the *big* event of last summer, centered around how Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* (2023) came out on the same day as Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* (2023). If you don't already see the slight humor in that, let me break it down further: pink, female-centred movie about femininity, the patriarchy, and *I'm Just Ken*; and grimy war movie about the repercussions of creating weapons and using power for "great responsibilities." Also, arguably, about the patriarchy. These movies were, in themselves, at least at surface level, two completely different movies that came out from renowned directors featuring big-time actors (big year for white people). Brat Summer was less the antithesis of this *event* and more so the *vibe*, which was only working so well due to the Clean

Girl aesthetic that rose to some prominence during this period and then sky-rocketed during the fall and winter of 2023 into 2024. But I argue that I saw some common trends between it and Brat Summer that don't really make them that different.

Skinny is the new body-positivity.

While Brat Summer encouraged messiness, encouraged being yourself even if it meant not taking off your makeup from a night out and wearing a slutty (rebranded as *cunty*) pair of shorts, the Clean Girl was about having slicked back hair, a uniformed outfit, a ten-step skincare routine, and a Stanley Cup if you were lucky. But as we cascaded more and more into a performative Clean Girl and the economy really, officially, went to shit, we resorted to what we knew best: partying and doing it with style.

But here're a couple of reasons why this only worked sometimes: partying also became expensive, style is definitely expensive, and they play *horrible* music at the club. They were *not* playing *Brat* here in Toronto, let me tell you that.

So, let's talk about the economy.

A recession is meant to be a time for more partying but, how come partying isn't so cheap anymore?

Though we are not in a recession (yet), it is certainly starting to feel like it. I can't get any food, fast food or not, that's less than \$15, and a drink at any outside establishment that isn't the comfort of my home is also at least \$15 (meal or a vodka cran?). I'm always at work but my bills seem to be... *more*. More expensive, more frequent, a month goes by in the blink of my eye. Even though we are not technically in a recession, periods of perpetual and collective broke ness can be marked by the music of the day. During the 2008 market crash and the years it took to build everything back, American "pop music was marked by fast, frenetic BPMs scientifically proven to induce posi-

tive emotions and hooky lyrics that waxed poetic on partying and relentless optimism. Enjoying life in spite of life, and quite literally, dancing our troubles away."

Doesn't that sound a little like the music that came out during the summer? "HOT TO GO," "Espresso," "Joyride," and the entirety of *Brat*. The rise of music like this also means a rise in going out, getting drunk, sneaky links at the backs of clubs, and shaking ass (flat or phat). But what happens when you have no money left?

This becomes less a matter of why partying isn't cheap anymore and more of why is leaving my house so expensive? A Torontonian took to TikTok and encapsulated my thoughts exactly. She said, "Everytime I leave the house I spend a minimum of \$100, since when did \$100 become the new \$20?"

"I don't have the money" all of a sudden isn't even an embarrassing excuse but a joke excuse. Most people think it's a joke when they hear that phrase so I wonder if all the rich-people-cosplaying-as-poor have turned to their natural ways and let the cat out of the bag. Now they're making the rest of us look bad...

Instead, they tell me, "Money always comes back," almost a whisper chant that echoes in my brain. Wait a second, money always comes back...

Money always comes back, they say, as they splurge every day on a Venti Starbucks refresher when you have to settle for "juice at home." Money always comes back, they say, as they sit back and recline after taking two classes a semester while you haul your ass through ice and snow trying to prevent yourself from having to pay an extra year's tuition yet you're failing all your classes.

Money always comes back... Apparently, not to me though.

What's it like to party when you work thrice as hard?

My main argument is simple: You get drunk easier. You have a little bit more fun. If you wanted to, you could have stayed home and saved some money that should be going towards your well-being. But instead, you chose to go out, and in the end, you had the privilege of that choice. So you get as drunk as you can, you do as many drugs as you can find, and you let your head get muffled with the hysterical BPM. Because tomorrow morning you have work and the day after that you have class. So why bother about everything you're stressing about when you can just forget it, once every couple of months? For one night, when you get to be just like your UofT peers; you can pretend to be rich.

The piling regret that exists at the back of your throat will only rise if you don't take the next shot. On me. Wait a second, I *love* this song! Wait, no! Dammit, they skipped the best part. Hey, who is this DJ anyway? Some kid from New York who had to book it here because he was so ass. How come we get the leftovers? 'Cause it's Toronto, we always get the leftovers. Be great or be nothing, I guess. Whiskey sours? Extra sour. Man, I just wanna hear those Club Classics...

A Black and White Winter

Zachary Zanatta

PLAYLIST

The final bright orange leaf twitches in the wind, desperately grasping onto a barren tree branch as the lone remnant of a vibrant fall. Finally, it loses the battle and is whisked away by the chilly breeze, landing in a dark puddle by the side of the road, the last sliver of colour washed away by the impending weather. At last, winter arrives. It gently covers the city with a monochrome blanket that will remain for the coming months. The days are cold, the nights are long, and even the lights seem a little dimmer. Winter brings with it an enveloping melancholy, one painted with lights, darks, and the greys in between. The following are 8 songs to score your black and white winter.

“Blue in Green” by Miles Davis is the sound of the winter arriving. It’s a moody scene, displaying all the muted emotions that bubble to the surface come winter. It plays like a movie scene, a lone figure against the black night, head hunched down letting out shaky breaths that emerge as mist which hangs momentarily before dissipating into the evening air. Jimmy Cobb’s drums quietly swish like footsteps dragging through the snow while Miles Davis and John Coltrane trade solos like distant conversations dipping behind street corners. It’s a tired song, drifting to its end like snow melting on a wet sidewalk. In the winter, the blues are sung with grey skies and aching loneliness.

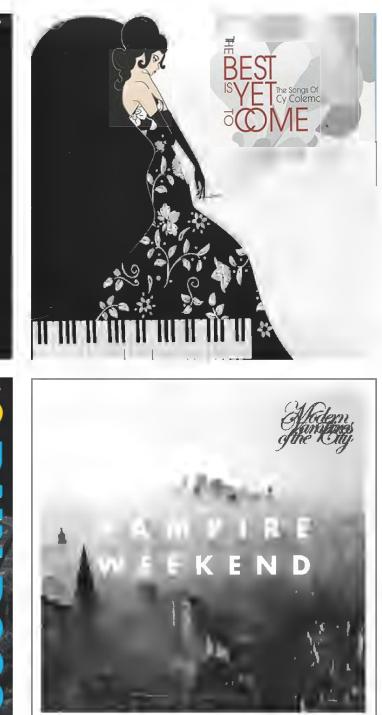
“Avalanche” is the sound of a story. Leonard Cohen’s swift finger-picked guitar foregrounds swelling strings that emerge like a ghostly warning of impending danger. Like turning the pages of a novel, the song creeps through sinister crescendos while spilling night-marsh poetic imagery. Cohen spits cryptic lyrics that drip like poisonous ink off of crinkled white pages. The words cast dark shadows that creep up the wall like frost, living and malevolent. They rise to the ceiling, forming a spectral forest with striking bars of light and dark. The song slithers between the trees and pierces the heart of the listener with dripping black hatred. The windows may be locked, but from Cohen’s icy words and dark instrumentation, the cold air finds a way in.

Fidgeting with the radio for hours in a cramped truck on an icy road will eventually lead you to the Magnetic Fields song “Born on a Train.” It’s the sound of long winter nights where the dark pavement of the road and the gloomy

night sky merge into the deepest black of winter. The stars are replaced with spattering snowflakes that flash for an instant before being swept away by a windshield wiper. “Born on a Train” feels like it’s transmitted through a radio signal that can only be found in the dark, bouncing between dark silhouettes of forests and beaming headlights. Its fuzzed-out production sounds like it was constructed by static organizing itself into familiar shapes. Despite the greyness, the song feels warm. It’s another lonesome passenger on the road to nowhere, following a convoy into the blackened void ahead. Home is undoubtedly far away, but with “Born on a Train,” it almost feels like you’re already there.

Through a frost-tinted window, a couple slow dances in their living room. With closed eyes they dance over the soft carpet by candlelight, holding one another close in a warm embrace. Meanwhile, in the apartment next door someone sits alone. They lean their head against the cold glass of the window and watch as tiny specks of people make trails in the snow on the street down below. In “Why Try to Change Me Now,” Fiona Apple croons for the lovers and the heartbroken. A painting formed by subdued comfort, Apple paints with delicate brushstrokes of darkened sorrow and bright white hope. It’s an anthem for those in love and a companion for those still waiting, inhabiting the familiar limbo in between. While it’s the same cold weather for everyone, the winter is anything but uniform. A mosaic of dark days and hopeful nights, “Why Try to Change Me Now” weaves in between them in a delicate waltz.

Between the harsh blacks and soft whites of winter is a simple grey. It’s the colour of a cloudy day, cold breath, and dirty snow gathered by the curb.



The grey is a mushy swirl of everything winter, a vibrant landscape lurking just beyond its drab palette. Neil Young’s “After the Gold Rush” is not unlike the greys of winter. Simple in its presentation but concealing immeasurable depth. Young’s mellow voice duets with a lonely piano, his surreal lyrics creating a gentle mist of welcoming isolation. By the time the lone French horn pierces the melancholy, it feels like a companion emerging from the fog to join you in the gloom. “After the Gold Rush” succumbs to the grey, finding hope and beauty in its surrender.

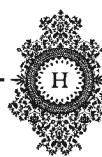
“Duke of Earl” by Gene Chandler plays like a dusty old record. The archaic vinyl wobbles and crackles over Chandler’s smooth vocals, a voice echoing from a romanticized past now long gone. It’s the soundtrack of an old photo album, yellowed pages holding dear memories being flipped through by the fire on a cold winter night. Black and white photos of young couples in love frozen in time and protected from the biting cold outside. Smiling faces and friends lost to memory are revived by the soft doo-wop chant. Photos come to life and the static images of the dusty album dance once more, flickering like an old film. Even if for a moment, the past returns and bathes the world in monochrome nostalgia. “Duke of Earl” is the echo of love from bygone days, sometimes dim but never silent.

A flickering neon sign emits a paltry white light obscured by a flurry of snow across a dark winter night. Inside is a bar obscured by a thick grey haze of cigarette smoke. The mismatched patrons sit slumped over half finished drinks, coming here looking for the only place they can call home right now. Tom Waits’ “Anywhere I Lay My Head” wheezes from a broken jukebox like a funeral march for the lonesome. Waits’ wounded howl is anything but pretty, but neither is the scene. The song walks with a grizzled limp, its eyes hollow and baggy from years on the road, not unlike its peers at the bar. But it doesn’t paint a

nihilistic picture, the song instead erupts with a mismatched, boozy marching band. The defeated blues turning into a drunken chorus line, still mournful but refusing to let the bastards get them down. It’s rough, ugly, and tough on the ears, but sometimes it’s the only place that’ll welcome you in. As the bombastic horns fade into silence, the patrons leave, and the bar shutters the windows. However, it’ll be open soon for a new batch of strangers to call home once again.

The city becomes barely a shadow beneath the endless white of a blizzard. Howling winds are reduced to a faint whistle emitting through the corners of an apartment window, and the glass is freezing to the touch. However, the powerful scene is merely a background, obscured with a string of black and white polaroid photographs. Sweet moments of love and laughter with friends and family block out the harsh realities of the winter. Across the empty apartment are a stack of board games to be used for the next night in. Unwashed mugs that previously carried hot chocolate are precariously stacked atop one another in the sink. Strewn across the apartment are cable knit sweaters, wool socks, and half melted candles. In the corner, a stack of vinyl, one of which carries the Vampire Weekend song “Young Lion.” It’s a winter lullaby, with hushed vocals of cold wind and twinkling piano that falls like snow. It’s not dreary, but nostalgic. Slow and chilly, but a gentle guide to navigating the dreary months. Winter is hard and cold, but it’s not without its beauty, so take your time, there’s a lot to enjoy.





Warmth

Jai Mann

FICTION

The forecast said it would be warm, but it felt as if the cold was creeping through my skin. I tried putting on all my clothes to preserve my heat, but it didn't work. I lay in my makeshift bed as my shivers and shakes kept me awake. It felt as if the chill in the air was trying to steal my breath. I shot myself upright and walked out of the tent. I was hit by a sharp flooding chill, and the little heat I did have quickly fled from my body. The night was cold and young as I looked around to see the faint crescent of light still illuminating the far ends of the visible earth. The stars too were out but shone in a near invisible tone.

I had gathered some wood earlier when I felt a turn in the weather. I piled them in a pit made by those before me, and I was able to make a smoky fire. I watched as the sky turned from a faint orange to black, and the stars from dim to sharp. I moved closer to the pit trying to keep myself from turning into ice. I kept putting in more wood, but as fog came, moisture seeped through everything in its path, and the logs became too wet to carry on the flame. With that, true darkness came.

At first, it felt like the cold was making it hard for me to think. My body felt stiff, but I couldn't stop from shaking. As my mind continued to numb itself, I tried to bring my attention to what was around me. I looked at the field that surrounded me, the trees that surrounded the field, and the fog that had decided to envelop both. I wish I hadn't come on foot, that I had taken a road rather than a path. My clothes, all layered to wrap around me, started to feel wet. I thought of going back

to my tent, but when I turned and looked at it, it looked empty and dead. It was too far anyway. I started picking out embers from the pit to hold, but they too had had their heat siphoned out of them.

I clenched my body trying to hold myself tight. I closed my eyes and murmured for morning to arise. I supposed it worked; my body flushed with warmth without help from the sun, perhaps the weather finally took a turn. I took off a layer, then another, it felt as if I was burning up. I heard sounds of steps and chatter, but when I blinked they silenced. I looked up and tried to make sense of the bright dots. When I closed my eyes, I remembered. Like that, it no longer felt hot. It no longer felt cold either. I opened my eyes and the world felt frozen. I looked around and at the end of the field stood a fellow. He beckoned me to come, and I did.

QUIZ

Should you do a master's degree?



Q1 Are you passionate about your field?

- a) Yes.
- b) It depends who you ask.
- c) No.

Q2 Do you want to work in academia?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.
- c) I'm not sure.

Q3 How were your grades during your bachelor's degree?

- a) Good.
- b) Bad.
- c) It depends on how you look at it.
- d) I can justify it, promise.

Q4 Do you want the geometry of your life to be expressed in the angles of an office room?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.
- c) What else would I choose?

Q5 Would you like to get married to someone you can never see, and when you do, have your conversations revolve around an esoteric subject no one cares about but you and the three other people conducting vaguely similar studies?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.
- c) I object to how you've phrased this question. I think love and the ceaseless production cycle academia demands can coexist. I don't think my curiosity will be eaten alive. I think I can do groundbreaking research and the dishes.

Q6 Would you like to get married at all?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.
- c) Why are you asking?

Q7

- a) Don't you think I can be
- b) Personally fulfilled by
- c) Something outside a heteronormative ideal of love?

Of course, but you've got to have relationships. And this was the easiest way to ask about how much you value them.

Q8 Do you think the monastic pursuit of education could be fulfilling for you all on its own?

- a) I think you're overestimating how much this will swallow me whole.

Q9 I don't know.

I think it's because I don't know how to do anything without ending up inside it. Oldest question in the world:

- a) Are you like me?
- b) Are you like me?
- c) Are you like me?

Q10 Are you passionate about your field?

- a) Enough.

If you answered mostly a, you should:

Pursue a master's degree well aware that the institution of academia is rotting at its core, is cracking at its edges, is designed to be inaccessible for people who didn't grow up in it, is an ivory tower that has been built this way for so many years that you as a solitary individual cannot make much of a difference but every movement in history is built from the collective work of solitary individuals so you will have to try.

Or don't, it's up to you. This isn't a personality quiz, it's your life.

If you answered mostly b or c, you should:

Go back up and complete the quiz.

by Minna Pelemiš



POETRY

Sight 2024 Behind Us

Many things end
Meaningfully

I bloom

Many feet run

I follow them

Graffiti came
and washed away
the mess of birth

I carved a pumpkin
In my dreams

Many things bloom
In bursts
Without warning

Hell can't exist
If the smile is
too crooked
not orange

We were too fast
To notice the defeat
Undone laces at the start

The blabbermouth
The incoherence
Too silly for meaning

I almost understand
that side of Him
distracted and random
in every moment of my life
Poetry can be louder
than theatre
in moments like these

Wonderous and weird

Good morning

MARIE KINDERMAN

Embrace

Let the azure droplets of the rain fall on your face,
It shall cleanse your mind while it makes its way
to the rest of your body.
Let the thunder suppress the sounds of the traffic
and the scrutiny of folk,
And embrace the storm,
For nature is healing and so are you.

SIDHARTH VJAY SOLOMON

Oseberg Hall

I stand here, a hall where ancient passions lay
long-dead, and buried under stones
stacked high with skill, that proudly show their age
as if to say: here still we sleep,
entombed on all four flanks by aging rock
in unmarked graves; good men who lived
and loved within these walls long ago,
now dead, but here in heart remain.

I hear the heart's remains.
they rest beneath the floor, yet deeper still
than those who lived and died a fleeting life;
my ear upon the ground, the beating
sound of blood I hear, not mortal, but divine;
upon my skin the cobblestones feel warm, although
I know that no heart here remains alive
within these walls—the hall of this dead god.

A. W. JENKINS

It Is Okay To Not Feel Okay

At times you may feel weak,
Exhausted,
Broken.
Though as the days go by,
You shall see,
How your mind is constantly dismantled,
And put together,
Stronger than ever before.
Worry not when you think that all hope is lost,
Because I know that you will always find a way,
To overcome your internal obstacles.
And remember my friend,
It is more than okay,
To not feel okay.

SIDHARTH VJAY SOLOMON

Pieck

Your old drawl,
my damsel weep,
and you wonder why
good people leave.

The greatest fortunes
come not from regret,
but from purchase
and ability to beget.

The chains rattle
and they twist.
Knots form in bramble,
dead men kick.

There is no good thing
one should ever give up,
if not for the promise of heaven
where rose thorns prick blood.

Salvations draws a' nearer,
to that once vanished point
Stars like frozen rain
tears ache in my joints.

The flames burn so bright,
regret unconcealed,
Heaven's sin awaits, dear
you will be fulfilled.

Please feel me, in your new,
cry me, in your old,
and hurt me, if you will
remember good stories told.

MEIXUAN FAN

It's The Simple Things

I find delight in the subtle things,
The sound of the rain,
Poetry,
Bamboo flutes and healing ragas,
Hour-long baths and Korean Dramas.

SIDHARTH VJAY SOLOMON

ACROSS

Parts that way

by Rick Lu

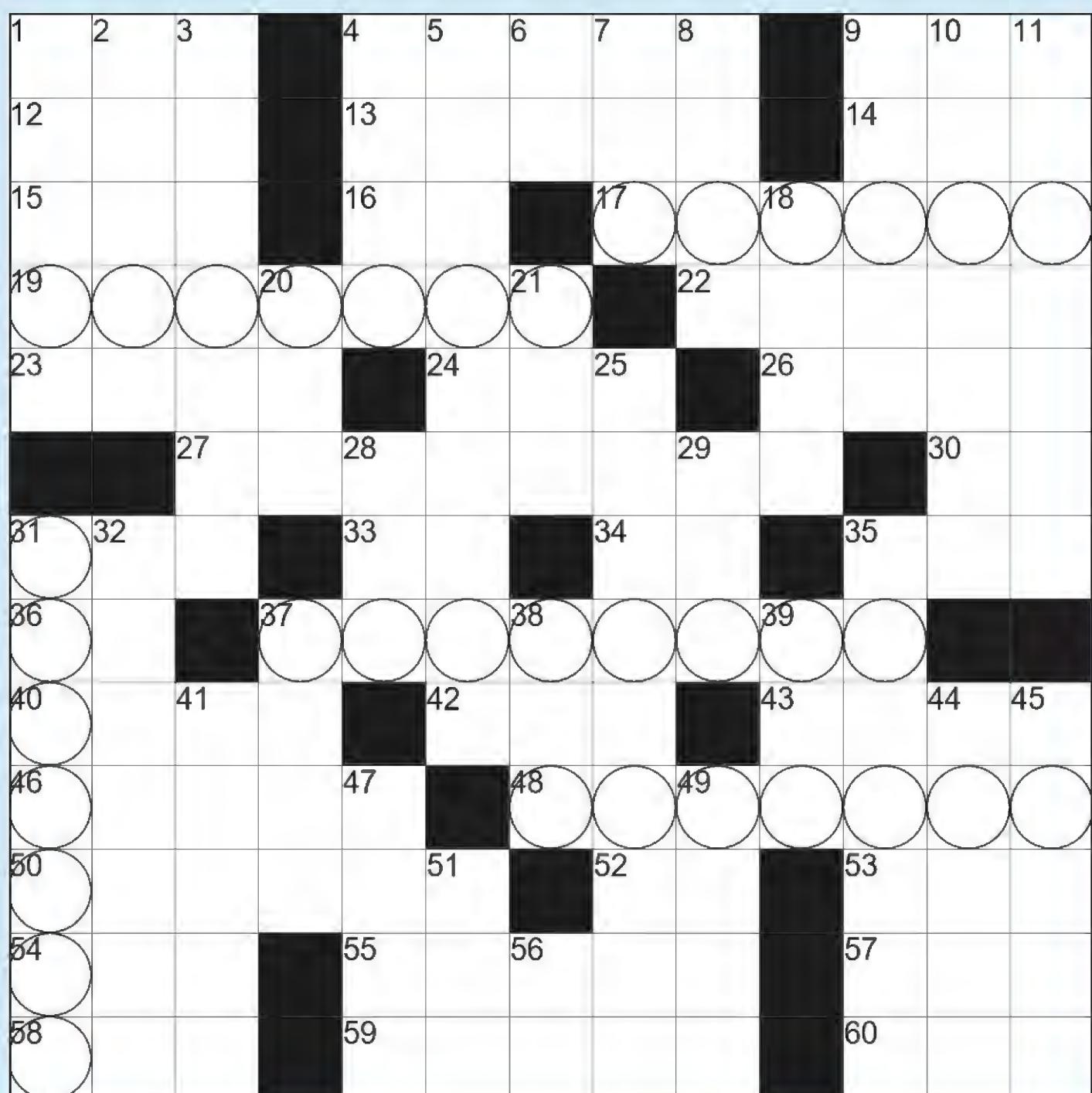
1 Tax collectors (abbr.)
 4 Anticipate
 9 2024 Rosé and Bruno Mars collaboration
 12 Scientist locale
 13 OLG product
 14 Logan, Kendall, Roman, or Shiv
 15 Newspaper identifiers after Vols
 16 What Robarts is to Innis Residence (abbr.)
 17 Seers; 2009 Pixar release
 19 Head focal point; bug repellent
 22 Cussed
 23 Walked
 24 Trouble
 26 Zeros' counterpart
 27 Christmas action
 30 Moscow domain
 31 Owned
 33 Not an Ave or a Rd
 34 Bond villain with an MD
 35 Psychic abbr.
 36 Blood type
 37 Walker; willing to do
 40 Space org.
 42 Comp. chip
 43 Celebratory poems
 46 Obscure celebrity
 48 Here again; gone
 50 Did alone
 52 "___, ___, Rasputin"
 53 "Fr?"
 54 Singer Yoko
 55 Fastens
 57 French salt
 58 1985 Nintendo console (abbr.)
 59 Has no correlation with last
 60 Before

DOWN

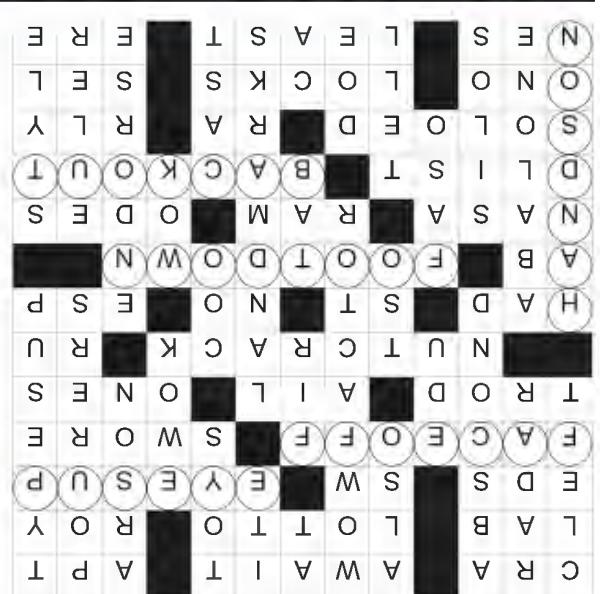
1 Split
 2 Antenna use case
 3 Flee in secret
 4 Moreover
 5 Impressive feature
 6 Email character
 7 Mineral suffix
 8 Fun objects
 9 Fire crime
 10 Ones who drain
 11 Computerizes text
 18 Star Wars teddy bear
 20 University domain
 21 Evergreen tree

25 Recognizable features
 28 Performers at Roy Thomson Hall (abbr.)
 29 Pigeon sound
 31 Grabbers; Can. province
 32 Kind of mollusc
 35 Celebrity's election action
 37 Between mi and la
 38 Above caps

39 Asian pan
 41 Storage towers
 44 e is his number
 45 2014 Taylor Swift song
 47 Gambler's flaw
 49 Wizard verb
 51 Buck's counterpart
 56 U of T domain



ANSWER KEY



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